



ANTHRAX

GENERAL INFORMATION

Description: Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by the spore-forming bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. Anthrax most commonly occurs in hoofed mammals and can also infect humans.

Symptoms: Symptoms of disease vary depending upon how the disease was contracted but usually occur within seven days after exposure. The serious forms of human anthrax are [inhalation anthrax](#), [cutaneous anthrax](#), and intestinal anthrax.

Initial symptoms of inhalation anthrax infection may resemble a common cold. After several days, the symptoms may progress to severe breathing problems and shock. Inhalation anthrax is often fatal.

Infection: The intestinal disease form of anthrax may follow the consumption of contaminated food and is characterized by an acute inflammation of the intestinal tract. Initial signs of nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting and fever are followed by abdominal pain, vomiting of blood, and severe diarrhea.

Direct person-to-person spread of anthrax is extremely unlikely, if it occurs at all. Therefore, there is no need to immunize or treat contacts of people ill with anthrax, such as household contacts, friends or coworkers, unless they also were exposed to the same source of infection.

Treatment: In people exposed to anthrax, infection can be prevented with antibiotic treatment. Early antibiotic treatment of anthrax is essential – delay lessens chances for survival. Anthrax usually is susceptible to penicillin, doxycycline and fluoroquinolones.

Vaccination/Prophylaxis: An anthrax vaccine also can prevent infection. Vaccination against anthrax is not recommended for the general public and is not available.